

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6735

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

INFO AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC HAWAII

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 14749

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PFOR, TH, LA

SUBJECT : LAO POLITICAL REFUGEES IN THAILAND AND

RTG/RLG RELATIONS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: A. FBIS BANGKOK D190327Z SEP 73;

B. VIENTIANE 6444;

C. VIENTIANE 6019;

D. BANGKOK 13796

SUMMARY: PRINCE SOUVANNA PHOUMA MENTIONED IN HIS PRESS
CONFERENCE OF SEPTEMBER 18 THE QUESTION OF THE STATUS
OF THOSE LAO POLITICAL REFUGEES WHO PARTICIPATED IN
THE AUGUST 20 COUP ATTEMPT. THE THAI POLICE, SEEKING
TO DETERMINE WHO MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE COUP,
HAVE INTERROGATED ALL BUT THREE POLITICAL REFUGEES WHO HAVE
NOT BEEN LOCATED. COLONEL BOUNLEUTH SAYCOCIE IS ONE OF THOSE
REMAINING AT LARGE. AN INFORMED MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OFFICIAL IMPLIED TO US THAT THE RTG DOES NOT WANT TO ACT
PRECIPITOUSLY AGAINST THE LAO POLITICAL REFUGEES, CONSIDERING
THE FACT THEY WERE LEGALLY GRANTED ASYLUM, AND WOULD PREFER TO
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DEPORT THEM WITHOUT ACTUALLY TURNING THEM DIRECTLY OVER TO THE

RLG.
END SUMMARY.

1. PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA HAS RAISED PUBLICLY FOR THE FIRST TIME THE QUESTION OF THE DISPOSITION OF THOSE LAO POLITICAL REFUGEES IN THAILAND WHO ALLEGEDLY PARTICIPATED IN THE AUGUST 20 COUP ATTEMPT (REF A). HE STATED IN AN INTERVIEW WITH A GROUP OF THAI JOURNALISTS ON SEPTEMBER 18 THAT THERE WAS NO DETERIORATION IN BILATERAL RELATIONS, BUT MENTIONED A LAO "REQUEST FOR EXTRADITION" AND THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE RLG "WILL DEMAND THAT THAILAND EXPEL THESE INDIVIDUALS FROM ITS TERRITORY", IF THEY ARE NOT EXTRADITED TO LAOS (REF B).

2. THE RTG IS AWARE OF LAO SUSPICIONS ABOUT POSSIBLE RTG INVOLVEMENT IN THE AUGUST 20 COUP ATTEMPT, WHICH EMANATE FROM INVOLVEMENT BY LAO WHO ENJOY POLITICAL ASYLUM IN THAILAND (REF C). IN REACTION TO THE COUP, THE RTG HAS PLACED PHOUMI NOUSAVAN AND OTHER EXILES UNDER STRICT SURVEILLANCE SINCE THE DAY OF THE COUP ATTEMPT. THE THAI POLICE THEN ORDERED ALL LAO POLITICAL EXILES TO REPORT THEIR WHEREABOUTS. ONLY THREE EXILES HAVE NOT YET REPORTED TO THE POLICE--COL. BOUNLEUTH SAYCOCIE, A MAN NAMED BOONKERN, AND A CAPT. PRAYOON KHAMWONGSA. NEWSPAPERS REPORT THAT THE THAI POLICE CONSIDER THEIR FAILURE TO REPORT AS PRIMA FACIE EVIDENCE THAT THESE EXILES PARTICIPATED IN THE COUP ATTEMPT AND HAVE, THEREFORE, VIOLATED THE CONDITIONS OF THEIR POLITICAL ASYLUM.

3. AN INFORMED OFFICIAL IN THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TOLD US THAT THE RLG PASSED A NOTE VERBALE DATED AUGUST 20 WHICH REQUESTED THAT THE RTG RETURN THE LAO AIRPLANE WHICH FLEW INTO THE BANGKOK AREA AUGUST 20, TRACE THE PLANE'S OCCUPANTS, AND, IF POSSIBLE, HAND THEM OVER TO THE RLG. HE SAID THAT THE RTG POSITION IS THAT, SINCE THE COURTS GRANTED THESE EXILES POLITICAL ASYLUM IN 1964, LEGAL PROCEEDINGS ARE NECESSARY TO EXTRADITE THEM. THIS WOULD REQUIRE A SPECIFIC EXTRADITION REQUEST FROM THE LAO SUPPORTED BY EVIDENCE
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SUFFICIENT TO CONVICT A COURT. THE RTG, HE SAID, DOES NOT WANT TO ESTABLISH A "BAD PRECEDENT" OF SUMMARILY HANDING OVER EXILES TO WHOM THEY HAD PREVIOUSLY GIVEN ASYLUM.

4. THE ABOVE NOTWITHSTANDING, THE RTG APPARENTLY CONSIDERS THAT THE THREE EXILES' FAILURE TO REPORT TO THE POLICE "IMPLIES" THAT THEY WERE INVOLVED IN THE COUP.
5#3 .*- 9**8:8-) -8\$ 5#-5 85 8 "CERTAIN" THAT THE

RTG "INTENDS" TO REVOKE THESE THREE EXILES' PERMISSION TO STAY IN THAILAND ON THE GROUNDS THAT THEY HAVE VIOLATED THE CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO THEIR POLITICAL ASYLUM. THEY WOULD THEN HAVE TO LEAVE THAILAND, BUT THEY WOULD NOT BE HANDED OVER TO THE LAO AUTHORITIES.

5. PRIME MINISTER THANOM KITTAKACHORN DENIED IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE OF AUGUST 29 THAT THE RLG HAD ASKED FOR THE EXTRADITION OF THE ALLEGED COUP PLOTTERS (REF D). IN TAKING THE POSITION THAT THE LAO NOTE OF AUGUST 20 WAS NOT A SPECIFIC EXTRADITION REQUEST, THE RTG SEEMS TO BE TRYING TO AVOID HAVING TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST THE POLITICAL REFUGEES ALLEGEDLY INVOLVED IN THE COUP UNTIL IT DECIDES WHAT TO DO ABOUT DEPORTING THEM.
MASTERS

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